Installation Office of Emergency Management

HURLBURT FIELD, FL

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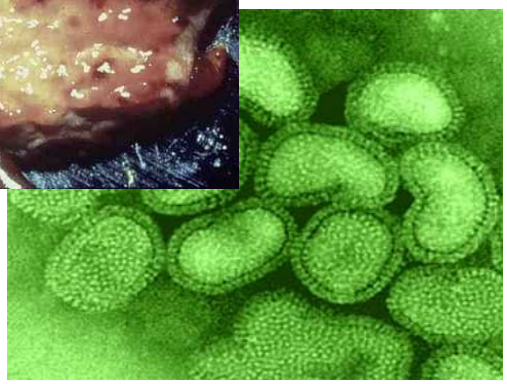
Monthly Newsletter for the Base Populace

Avian Influenza A



AIR FORCE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
AFEM
PREVENT ▲ PREPARE ▲ RESPOND ▲ RECOVER

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What is H5N1:

It has been reported in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Near East

- **Influenza A (H5N1) virus** – also called “H5N1 virus” – is an influenza A virus subtype that occurs mainly in birds, is highly contagious among birds, and can be deadly to them.

- Outbreaks of avian influenza H5N1 occurred among poultry in eight countries in Asia (Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, South Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam) during late 2003 and early 2004. At that time, more than 100 million birds in the affected countries either died from the disease or were killed in order to try to control the outbreaks. By March 2004, the outbreak was reported to be under control.
  Beginning in June 2004, however, new outbreaks of influenza H5N1 among poultry and wild birds were reported in Asia. Since that time, the virus has spread geographically. Reports of H5N1 infection in wild birds in Europe began in mid-2005. In early 2006, influenza A H5N1 infection in wild birds and poultry were reported in Africa and the Near East.
  Human cases of influenza A (H5N1) infection have been reported in Azerbaijan, Cambodia, China, Djibouti, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Lao

What are the risks:

- H5N1 virus does not usually infect people, but more than 200 human cases have been reported. Most of these cases have occurred from direct or close contact with infected poultry or contaminated surfaces; however, a few cases of human-to-human spread of H5N1 virus have occurred.

- So far, spread of H5N1 virus from person to person has been rare, limited and unsustained. Nonetheless, because all influenza viruses have the ability to change, scientists are concerned that H5N1 virus one day could be able to infect humans and spread easily from one person to another. Because these viruses do not commonly infect humans, there is little or no immune protection against them in the human population.

- If H5N1 virus were to gain the capacity to spread easily from person to person, an influenza pandemic (worldwide outbreak of disease) could begin. No one can predict when a pandemic might occur. However, experts from around the world are watching the H5N1 situation in Asia and Europe very closely and are preparing for the possibility that the virus

Preparing food?

- You cannot get avian influenza from properly handled and cooked poultry and eggs.
  There currently is no scientific evidence that people have been infected with bird flu by eating safely handled and properly cooked poultry or eggs.

- Most cases of avian influenza infection in humans have resulted from direct or close contact with infected poultry or surfaces contaminated with secretions and excretions from infected birds. Even if poultry and eggs were to be contaminated with the virus, proper cooking would kill it. In fact, recent studies have shown that the cooking methods that are already recommended by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for poultry and eggs to prevent other infections will destroy influenza viruses as well.

- So to stay safe, the advice is the same for protecting against any infection from poultry:
  -Wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling raw poultry and eggs.
  -Clean cutting boards and other utensils with soap and hot water to keep raw poultry from contaminating other foods.
  -Use a food thermometer to make sure you cook poultry to a temperature of at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit Consumers may wish to cook poultry to a higher temperature for personal

What is the CDC doing

CDC is taking part in a number of pandemic prevention and preparedness activities, including the following:

-Providing leadership to the National Pandemic Influenza

-Preparedness and Response Task Force, created in May 2005 by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

-Working with the Association of Public Health Laboratories on training workshops for state laboratories on the use of special laboratory (molecular) techniques to identify H5 viruses.

-Working with the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists and others to help states with their pandemic planning efforts.

-Working with other agencies, such as the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration, on antiviral stockpile issues.

-Working with the World Health Organization (WHO) to investigate influenza H5N1 among people (e.g., in Vietnam) and to provide help in laboratory diagnostics and training to local authorities.

-Performing laboratory testing of H5N1 viruses.

-Starting a $5.5 million initiative to improve influenza

CDC’s continued efforts:

- -Holding or taking part in training sessions to improve local capacities to conduct surveillance for possible human cases of H5N1 and to detect influenza A H5 viruses by using laboratory techniques.
- -Developing and distributing reagent kits to detect the currently circulating influenza A H5N1 viruses.
- -CDC has developed and is distributing the first FDA approved test for the detection of the H5 viruses that first emerged in Asia in 2003.

CDC also is working closely with WHO and the National Institutes of Health on safety testing of vaccine candidates and development of additional vaccine virus seed candidates for influenza A (H5N1) and other subtypes of influenza A viruses.

For more information, contact your installation’s Office of Emergency Management at 884-1149 or the Medical Group at 884-1286.